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Local Magazines Enlivening Several Cities

Publications Range From the Bland to the Aggressive

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Special to The New York Times

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 13—A Chicagoan recently described Philadelphia as "the city with that lively magazine."

A number of interests in the City of Brotherly Love with Philadelphia Magazine were less lively.

Philadelphia is perhaps the most aggressive and irreverent of a growing number of slick-paper local magazines, now totaling about 60, that publicizes their cities' names and deal with their life and problems.

(New York and New Yorker magazines, as weeklies with national circulations, are in a different category, though New York magazine tackles similar local subjects.)

The growth of local magazines has cut sharply into the advertising market traditionally held by the nationally syndicated newspaper supplements, such as Parade and This Week. The impact of the local journals was cited as a major factor in This Week's plan to discontinue publication after Nov. 2, announced yesterday.

Chamber Played Role

Like most of the other local magazines, Philadelphia started as a city booster sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. Unlike most of the others, it has severed all ties with the local chamber. The change in course to wide-ranging investigative reporting came after D. Herbert Lipson, now 40 years old, became publisher a few years ago. Unlike most other city magazines, the unsubsidized Philadelphia is now making money.

"We grossed \$1,250,000 last year," said Alan Halpern, the 43-year-old editor, during a conversation in the magazine's plush, modern offices high over downtown Philadelphia.

The other day the Pearl S. Buck Foundation here lost its license to solicit funds in Pennsylvania after the magazine had exposed mismanagement attributed to a dance instructor whom the noted author had installed as foundation president.

Earlier in the year a leading Philadelphian, Walter H. Annenberg, owner of The

Philadelphia Inquirer and Ambassador to Britain, was the subject of a highly unflattering two-part portrait that may now be extended into a book.

Before that, Philadelphia Magazine exposed an Inquirer reporter, Harry J. Karafin, as using his job to shake down businessmen by threatening adverse publicity. Last October Karafin was convicted on 20 counts of blackmail and 20 counts of corrupt solicitation.

There was no mention of the foundation and Karafin affairs by other Philadelphia media until the magazine uncovered them.

Mayor James H. J. Tate, attacked once again in the current issue of Philadelphia as blunder prone, is among those who dislike the magazine. His office has called the magazine "irresponsible."

The sophisticated, attractively designed periodical has a staff of 36 and an audited paid circulation of 62,000. Sales of Philadelphia on newsstands here exceed those of all other magazines except Playboy and TV Guide.

Most of Philadelphia is written by staff members, but other writers are paid up to \$800 for articles. One, by Kristin Hunter, won the Sigma Delta Chi award for magazine reporting last year for illuminating problems of a bright young negro girl imprisoned by ghetto life.

Philadelphia toes stepped on by Philadelphia Magazine have been numerous. Both political parties have been on the receiving end of criticism. All three newspapers here have felt the magazine's stiletto. Conflicts between Roman Catholic laymen and priests and the church's conservative hierarchy here were spotlighted.

Clip joints in the center of the staid city were exposed as panderers in sex. The birth control pill was a cover-story subject long before the national magazines followed suit. Lesbians and male homosexuals in Philadelphia were the topics of articles called "The Invisible Sorority" and "The Furtive Fraternity." This month Nancy Love, the senior editor, stripped to do a sensitive article on nude marathons and other group psychological encounters that have reached Philadelphia.

Other magazines are taking Philadelphia's tack. John Paul Arata left Philadelphia

Magazine this year to become publisher of Chicago-land, the Twin Citizen (Minneapolis-St. Paul) and St. Louis.

Chicagoland's lead article this month is "The Mob and Mr. Daley." The editor, Jay Robert Nash, called the magazine's reports "the kind of stories newspapers won't touch." They contrast sharply with the promotional articles in the beautifully designed Chicago Magazine, published by a foundation set up by Mayor Richard J. Daley's Committee for Economic and Cultural Development.

The four-year-old Washingtonian, one of the brightest of the new breed, still loses money but enjoys itself anyway.

"Why is this rat smiling?" It asked recently in an article on the capital as a mecca for rodents.

If that was hardly designed to please the District of Columbia Board of Trade, the Washingtonian has compensated somewhat by leading a campaign to capture the country's 1976 bicentennial celebration for Washington.

"I think we're at least partly responsible for goosing people to do something about this," said Laughlin Phillips, editor of the magazine since its birth.

Well-known bylines frequently appear on its pages, often drawn from the Washington press corps. Art Buchwald, Marquis Childs and William Walton, the artist, are on the Washingtonian's advisory board.

West Coast Periodicals

On the West Coast, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego also have independent, well-written city slicks.

San Diego Magazine provides a counterweight to the conservative Copley newspapers there. It is credited with saving the La Jolla waterfront from developers who sought to make a Miami Beach of it. Despite a threatened boycott by advertisers, San Diego also provided a lengthy, unbiased look at the views of Herbert Marcuse, the controversial philosophy professor at the University of California at San Diego.

Seattle, backed by the radio and television interests of the Stimson Bullitt family, is another of the few hard-hitting city magazines free of chamber subsidy.

The magazine campaigned successfully for passage of a bond issue for hospital improvement. It jabbed at the city's "dirty, crusty city council."